

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A frame for holding a metal sheet material taut, comprising:

a support, and

exactly two legs which extend essentially parallel to one another transversely from the support,

on which legs fixing means are provided for fixing, each one of the opposing edges of a piece of metal sheet material thereto so that the sheet is held taut under a tensile pretension, wherein,

at least one of the legs can be moved along the support towards and away from the other leg,

compensation means are provided to compensate for stretch and/or shrinkage of the piece of sheet material fixed between the legs to hold the sheet taut under a tensile pretension, and

the compensation means comprise a spring member, one end of which is able to bear on a fixed point on the support ~~in the frame~~ and the other end of which interacts with the movable leg.

2-3. (cancelled)

4. (previously presented) Frame according to Claim 1, wherein the compensation means further comprise a securing member that can be secured in various positions along the support, the spring member extending between said securing member and the movable leg.

5. (previously presented) Frame according to Claim 4, wherein the support comprises an I-shaped or upside-down T-shaped beam and the securing member comprises a movable clamp around the bottom flange of the support.

6. (original) Frame according to Claim 5, wherein the clamp has a slider with respect to which the movable leg can be slid, which slider has a stop to limit the sliding movement of the leg with respect to the clamp.

7. (previously presented) Frame according to Claim 1, wherein the spring member has a helical spring as well as a guide extending through the helical spring, which guide is attached at one end to the clamp such that it can slide and at the opposing end is fixed to the leg.

8. (original) Frame according to Claim 7, wherein the

guide has a stop that interacts with the clamp, such that the helical spring is pretensioned between the clamp and the leg if the stop is in contact with the clamp.

9. (original) Frame according to Claim 1, wherein the movable leg has a base provided with rollers that can be rolled relative to the beam.

10. (previously presented) Frame according to claim 1, wherein the legs have electric contacts for feeding an electric current through the sheet metal material.

11. (currently amended) Device for carrying out an electrochemical treatment on sheet metal, comprising:

a container for holding a liquid bath as well as a frame for holding metal sheet material taut,

the frame comprising a support as well as exactly two legs which extend essentially parallel to one another transversely from the support,

on which legs fixing means are provided for fixing, each one of opposing edges of a piece of metal sheet material thereto,

characterised in that at least one of the legs can be moved along the support towards and away from the other leg to tautly hold the metal sheet between the two legs,

the legs having clamps with electrical contacts to apply a voltage ~~can be applied~~ to the tautly held metal sheet,

wherein, during an electrochemical treatment of the metal sheet the metal sheet becomes warmer, expands, and remains taut under a tensile pretension between the legs.

12. (previously presented) Device according to Claim 11, wherein said container is embodied to contain the liquid bath with the liquid bath comprising chromic acid.

13. (previously presented) A frame for holding a metal sheet taut, comprising:

a beam support (1);

exactly two legs (2, 3) attached extending from the support and extending laterally parallel to each other,

at least one of the two legs slidably attached to the support to allow movement along the support; and

clamps attached to each of the two legs to hold a metal sheet between the two legs,

wherein the clamps each comprise electrical contacts configured to apply a voltage to the held metal sheet.

14. (previously presented) The frame of claim 13, wherein,

the support has flanges,

a first of the two legs stationary and fixed to the support, and

a second of the two legs is slidably attached to the support by a trolley with wheels that are movable along the flanges of the support.

15-16. (cancelled)

17. (previously presented) The frame of claim 13, further comprising:

a tensile pretension element attached to the slidably attached leg to maintain the held metal sheet tautly under a tensile pretension between the two legs so that as the sheet expands the metal sheet remains taut under the tensile pretension between the legs.

18. (cancelled)

19. (previously presented) The frame of claim 17, wherein,

the pretension element comprises

a clamp fitted on a bottom flange of the support,

a connector configured to releasably fix the clamp at a desired position on the support,

a slider fixed to the clamp,

a stop located at an end of the slider remote from the clamp,

a guide fixed to the slidingly attached leg, which guide protrudes through a corresponding hole in the clamp,

a pretensioned helical spring extending to the stop,

wherein, the tautly held metal sheet presses the helical spring and upon expansion of the metal sheet tensile force produced by the helical spring is maintained by movement of the slidingly attached leg under the influence of the spring pretension.

20. (previously presented) The frame of claim 13, further comprising:

a tensile pretension element attached to the slidingly attached leg to maintain the held metal sheet tautly under a tensile pretension between the two legs so that as the sheet expands the metal sheet remains taut under the tensile pretension between the legs,

the pretension element comprises

a clamp releasably fixable at a desired position on the support,

a slider fixed to the clamp,

a guide fixed to the slidingly attached leg, which guide protrudes through a corresponding hole in the clamp,

a stop located at an end of the slider remote from the

clamp,

a pretensioned helical spring extending to the stop,
wherein, the tautly held metal sheet presses the
helical spring and upon expansion of the metal sheet tensile
force produced by the helical spring is maintained by movement of
the slidingly attached leg under the influence of the spring
pretension.

21. (new) Frame according to claim 1, wherein,
the two legs each further have tensile clamps for
clamping the piece of sheet material.

22. (new) Frame according to claim 1, wherein,
the two legs each further have stretching clamps for
clamping the piece of sheet material.